

I have been closely monitoring the development of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) and its potential effects on our community. To date I have opposed the initiative, on the grounds that it is ill-conceived and will deal a crippling blow to cross-border trade in our area.

A report by the Government Accountability Office has confirmed these suspicions, and has led me to introduce legislation that requires the WHTI to be more fully examined before any action is taken by the Departments of State and Homeland Security. By delaying its implementation, both the public and government officials will have more time to consider implications of the WHTI, and raise any concerns they might have – with additional time comes additional insight.

The recent arrest in Canada of 17 alleged co-conspirators in a plot to commit terrorist acts is directly relevant to the WHTI. The initiative's proponents will no doubt label this as an example of why border security must be rigidly enforced. Border security is no doubt important – but those of us living close to the border can instead understand this arrest as an example of the nearly seamless cooperation between Canadian and American authorities when it comes to protecting citizens.

An article in the June 5th New York Times, *Canadian Border Proves Difficult to Secure*, revealed that the FBI had been collaborating with their Canadian counterparts on this particular case long before it reached public view. The official commenting on the matter went on to note that this was a completely normal practice – Canadian and American law enforcement agencies have a history of successful counter-terrorism operations that pre-dates 9/11.

It is this cooperation that is our best defense against those wishing to commit terrorist acts in the United States: careful, painstaking intelligence-gathering and measures that neutralize threats before they materialize. While border control is no doubt a necessary step in this process, it is hardly the most pressing. The WHTI is based on the misguided assumption that potential terrorists become a critical concern only when they attempt to cross the physical border into America. Considering that our border with Canada stretches across 4,000 miles, including vast expanses of forests and lakes, absolute border integrity is nearly impossible to achieve. The measures proposed by the WHTI are at best flawed, and are at worst an actual threat to our security, our vibrant cross-border trade, and our cherished relationship with our neighbors to the north.